



YOUTH COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS BUREAU STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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Applicable ACA Standards: 2-7020, 2-7020-1	Revision Date: 02-17-10	
Signature: /s/ Karen Duncan	Effective Date: 4-10-09	
Signature: /s/ Steve Gibson		

I. BUREAU DIRECTIVE:

The Youth Community Corrections (YCC) Bureau maintains positive, informative relationships with the public, the media, and other agencies with related functions. It provides timely, complete, and accurate information on Department operations, accomplishments, critical incidents, and emergencies in compliance with all statutes that govern confidentiality and public information by balancing the public's right to know with the individual's right to privacy. This procedure will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

II. DEFINITIONS:

Communications Director – an official spokesperson for Department programs, policies, and plans, who develops Department communications policy and procedure and ensures the public is given accurate, consistent, and timely information.

News Media Plan – written procedures that guide public information officers' ongoing contact with the news media.

News Media Representatives – properly credentialed representatives of any accredited news organization that report news for a general circulation newspaper, news magazine, national or international news service, radio or television news program, and internet news service. Authors and freelance journalists who are researching and/or writing about corrections or criminal justice issues must provide their credentials to verify their association with legitimate news or media organizations. Nothing in this definition is intended to remove from the Department Director, Department Communications Director, or facility PIO the discretion to determine who constitutes news media representatives for purposes of access to youth.

News Release – an official Department written statement distributed to the news media to inform the public and provide media coverage related to Department business.

Program – any youth correctional facility or community-based program operated under Department jurisdiction or contract.

Public Information Officer (PIO) – an official spokesperson designated by the Youth Services

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Division (YSD) Administrator to provide facility or program information to the public.

Youth – an individual aged 10 through 17 who has been court-ordered to the Department of Corrections for placement into a secure care facility.

III. PROCEDURES:

A. Mission of the Communication Plan

The Plan guides the YCC Bureau to communicate its policies and performance in a manner that builds public and employee confidence with increased public and internal understanding that supports, establishes, and maintains working relationships with the public and news media. The plan includes areas in each facility that are accessible to media representatives.

B. General Requirements

1. YCC Bureau Chief will consult with the Department's Communication Director to ensure all media plans are consistent.
2. The YSD Administrator is the PIO and program spokesperson for contacts with the media. In the YSD Administrator's absence, the YCC Bureau Chief is the designated PIO for YCC.
3. PIOs will handle the facility or program day-to-day public and media relations duties subject to the administrator's guidance and direction and in keeping with the Department's and Governor's media plan.
4. The Communications Director and PIOs will provide current, factual verbal and written information to the media; however, at times information for immediate release is limited by the confidentiality, safety, and security needs of the program.
5. Every effort will be made to provide the public and media with as much information as possible and to establish times when additional information may be available while maintaining security.
6. All areas of Juvenile Parole Offices, except for confidential files, are accessible to media representatives. Common areas of the Great Falls Youth Transition Centers are accessible to media representatives.

C. Media Access to Youth Programs

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1. Prior to scheduling an interview, youth must sign a written consent form. The form must be accessible to YCC Bureau staff. [Refer to [YCC 50-2 \(A\), Interview/Photo Consent Form](#)]
2. To access youth programs, news media representatives will:
 - a. sign a Department confidentiality form upon program admission [Refer to [YCC 50-2 \(B\), Youth Confidentiality Form](#)];
 - b. agree not to identify youth by name; and
 - c. agree not to film or photograph youth in a manner that allows for visual identification;
3. Although media representatives are invited to examine programs and interview youth, any photography will be conducted in a manner that prevents youth identification.
4. In accordance with confidentiality requirements for youth in correctional facilities, staff may only provide media representatives with information confirming whether a specific youth is in residence.

D. Media Spokespersons

1. The YSD Administrator and YCC Bureau Chief will be the designated spokespersons for YCC programs.
2. Other Department employees will not comment to the news media as official Department spokespersons unless specifically requested to do so by the administrator or the Department Director.
3. To ensure accuracy of information provided to the public, YCC Bureau staff is not authorized to publish or release original printed materials developed by the Department without prior approval from an administrator, the Department Communications Director, or the Department Director.
4. YCC Bureau staff wishing to speak to the media as private citizens, not as representatives of the Department, will make such contacts during off-duty hours and make clear to the media they are representing their own personal views, not those of the Department or the YCC Bureau.

E. Media Inquiries

1. The Department Communications Director and YCC PIOs will promptly and accurately respond to all media inquiries.

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2. YCC Bureau PIOs will generally only provide information specific to their programs. Other inquiries, about which there may be questions, will be referred to the Communications Director.
3. In emergencies, the YSD Administrator or YCC Bureau Chief may limit public and media access to programs, and:
 - a. identify a press spokesperson to periodically brief all media; and
 - b. locate a media briefing center away from tactical operations if an emergency continues for an extended period of time.

F. Release of Information

1. Typically, the Communications Director and YSD Administrator or YCC Bureau Chief will handle the release of information to the public and news media.
2. The Communications Director will:
 - a. release information to the public and news media about unrestricted YCC operations, policies, procedures, and issues; and
 - b. advise and assist YSD Administrator or YCC Bureau Chief in matters that relate to national and international news media requests for access to, or information about, a YCC Bureau program.
3. The YSD Administrator or YCC Bureau Chief will:
 - a. provide the public and media information pertaining to YCC Bureau programs;
 - b. promptly report any contact from a national or international news representative to the Communications Director;
 - c. promptly contact the Communications Director if a local reporter's inquiry involves a controversial issue or may impact the Department; and
 - d. routinely provide the media with newsworthy coverage about a range of YCC Bureau operations and activities, the contents of which will be provided to the Communications Director on an as-needed basis or, in the event of emergency, at the earliest possible opportunity.
4. To ensure accuracy of information provided to the public, YCC Bureau employees:
 - a. will refer all media inquiries about official YCC Bureau business to the program PIOs or administrator;

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- b. will refer media inquiries for staff information to the YSD Administrator or YCC Bureau Chief who will consult with the Department prior to any information that may be in question; and
 - c. will not make official statements on behalf of the Department or YCC unless authorized to do so by the Communications Director, YSD Administrator or YCC Bureau Chief.
- 5. The Department Director or identified acting director will:
 - a. respond to media inquiries after normal duty hours or refer inquiries to the person designated by the program administrator or spokesperson; and
 - b. contact the administrator and Communications Director if an inquiry pertains to an issue that may affect the entire Department or generate significant media coverage.

G. Release of Information Restrictions

- 1. By law, the Department cannot release information regarding psychiatric, medical, or youth criminal histories. An exception applies to sexual or violent offenders who are required by the sentencing court to register under [Section 46-23-504, MCA, Persons Required to Register](#); and [Section 46-23-508, MCA, Dissemination of Information](#).
- 2. Although [Section 41-5-215, MCA](#), provides for public inspection of all information filed with the clerk of court, Department programs may restrict provision of specific youth information to media representatives.
- 3. Programs may release the following information on youth under Department custody:
 - a. disclosure of the youth's presence at the program
 - b. the physical description of a youth in the event of an escape
 - c. the county of residence of a youth in the event of an escape
 - d. the committing offense of a youth in the event of an escape
 - e. the circumstances of an escape
- 4. Programs will refer media representatives to the committing jurisdiction for any specific information related to a particular youth.

H. News Releases

- 1. The Communications Director, or designee, will review and approve all news releases prior to release.

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2. In the event of an emergency, the Department will fax or email releases to news organizations throughout the state.
3. The Communications Director and Youth Services Division Administrator will maintain a file of information released to the media. Media representatives may review the file but must schedule the review for normal working hours.

I. News Clippings and Videotaped News Coverage

1. When possible, the Communications Director or program spokesperson will record radio or television news coverage involving the Department.
2. The YSD Administrator will forward, when necessary and available, copies of videotapes and newspaper clippings pertaining to Department or program activities to the Communications Director.

J. Responsiveness to the Media

YCC Bureau will operate in a transparent way that encourages a better public understanding of program goals and operational procedures, and will:

1. Provide prompt, complete responses to all correspondence and other requests from the media.
2. Participate in organizations and meetings that assure cooperation with other criminal justice agencies in information gathering, exchange, and standardization, including strategic and contingency planning at federal, state, and local levels.
3. Provide access to YCC Bureau programs through structured media visits, as well as for community members, academic professionals, law enforcement agencies, victims and their families, and other selected groups and organizations as long as confidentiality and security are not compromised.
4. Meet on a regular basis with media staff and editorial boards to address areas of mutual concern about the newsworthy event coverage that relates to the department.

K. Written and Verbal Inquiries

1. Verbal and written inquiries about the YCC Bureau from news media will be routed to the Communications Director, YSD Administrator, or YCC Bureau Chief depending on the nature of the inquiry.

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2. The individual contacted will answer inquiries that only require a telephone response the same working day in which they were received, or as soon thereafter as possible.
3. Written responses will be made within two weeks of receipt of the inquiry.
4. In cases where a response may be significantly delayed, an interim verbal or written response will be provided.

L. Filmmaker and Writer Access to Programs

1. Filmmakers, writers for non-news magazines, and other related personnel will direct inquiries about access to correctional programs to the Communications Director.
2. The Department Director and YSD Administrator or YCC Bureau Chief will consult and consider permission for access on a case-by-case basis.
3. Filmmakers and writers will be subject to the established rules on offender confidentiality.

M. Denial of Media Access

1. When the Department Director, YSD Administrator, or YCC Bureau Chief declares a facility state of emergency or determines that media access could adversely affect the safety or security of a facility, the Department Director, Communications Director, YSD Administrator or YCC Bureau Chief may deny media access to programs.
2. The individual designating emergency will lift the emergency restriction as soon as possible without jeopardizing the safety and security of the program, staff, or youth.
3. During emergencies, and to the extent possible, regular briefings will be scheduled to ensure the flow of timely information to the media.

N. Absconders from GFYTC

1. In the event a youth absconds from the Great Falls Youth Transition Centers, media inquiries should be answered and media notification should be made by only the Center Director or the Center Program Manager. The following entities in Great Falls, MT will be telephoned and faxed if a youth absconds from the

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Great Falls Youth Transition Centers using [YCC 50-2 \(C\)](#), [Great Falls Youth Transition Centers Absconding Memorandum to Media](#):

- a. Great Falls Tribune – 791-1444, fax 791-1431, email tribcity@greatfalls Tribune.com;
 - b. KRTV-TV – 791-5400, fax 791-5479, email krtv@krtv.com;
 - c. KFBB-TV – 453-4377, fax 727-9703, email kfbb@kfbb.com;
 - d. KMON-AM – 761-7600, fax 761-5511, email swalters@cweal thradio.com;
 - e. KQDI-AM – 761-2800, fax 727-7218, email terry@g106rocks.com; and,
 - f. KEIN-AM – 761-1310, fax 454-3775.
2. Information that may be released on youth under the custody of the Department includes the following:
 - a. Disclosure of the youth’s presence at the facility/program;
 - b. The physical description of a youth that absconded;
 - c. The county of residence of a youth that absconded;
 - d. The committing offense of a youth that absconded; and
 - e. Circumstances of absconding.
 3. Media representatives shall be referred to the committing jurisdiction for any specific information related to a particular youth. Except as specified in (a.) below, do not release youth names to media representatives.
 - a. Information regarding psychiatric, medical, or juvenile criminal histories of youth cannot be released under law. The exception to this is criminal histories and names of sex offenders who have not been exempted by the sentencing court from the requirement to register under 41-5-1513 (d), MCA.
 - b. Media inquiries regarding staff should be referred to the YCC Bureau Chief who will consult with the Department prior to releasing any information that is in question.
 - c. Other information shall be released to the news media at the discretion of the Department, Division Administrator, or Program PIO.

IV. CLOSING:

Questions concerning this policy should be directed to the Youth Community Corrections Bureau Chief.

V. REFERENCES:

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<u>2-6-102, MCA</u>	<u>Citizens Entitled to Inspect and Copy Public Writings</u>
<u>2-15-112, MCA</u>	<u>Duties and Powers of Department Heads</u>
<u>41-5-103, MCA</u>	<u>Definitions</u>
<u>41-5-215, MCA</u>	<u>Youth Court and Department Records -- Notification of School</u>
<u>41-5-216, MCA</u>	<u>Disposition of Youth Court, Law Enforcement, and Department Records</u>
<u>46-23-504, MCA</u>	<u>Persons Required to Register – Procedure</u>
<u>46-23-508, MCA</u>	<u>Dissemination of Information</u>
<i>Art. Sec 9 and 10 of the Montana Constitution</i>	
<i>Title 2, Chapter 3, Public Participation in Governmental Operations</i>	
<u>DOC 1.1.8</u>	<u>Media Relations</u>
<u>DOC 1.5.6</u>	<u>Offender Records Access and Release</u>
<u>DOC 1.8.1</u>	<u>Victim Services</u>
<u>DOC 3.3.4</u>	<u>Media Access to Offenders</u>

VI. ATTACHMENTS:

[YCC 50-2 \(A\) Interview/Photo Consent Form](#)
[YCC 50-2 \(B\) Youth Confidentiality Form](#)
[YCC 50-2 \(C\) Great Falls Youth Transition Centers Absconding Memorandum to Media](#)